

The Life Of St. Benedict

480-547

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

The Life of St. Benedict

The Great patriarch of the Western Monks (480-547 A.D.)

St. Gregory the Great (540-604 A.D.)

Nihil Obstat: Frowinus

Abbas Neo-Angelo Montanus

Imprimatur: ✠ Mauritius

Episcopus Sancti Josephi
St. Joseph, Missouri
March 4, 1910

Originally published in 1910 by the Benedictine Convent of Clyde, Missouri as part of the book *Father Paul of Moll: A Flemish Benedictine and Wonder-Worker of the Nineteenth Century*, by Edward van Speybrouck, which book was republished by TAN Books, an Imprint of Saint Benedict Press, LLC.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 94-61773

ISBN: 978-0-89555-512-0

The type in this book is the property of TAN Books, an Imprint of Saint Benedict Press, LLC, and may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without written permission of the Publisher. (This restriction applies only to this type, not to quotations from the book.)

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina
www.TANBooks.com

2012



St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547 A.D.), Founder of the Benedictine Order and Father of Western monasticism, with St. Maurus (*left*) and St. Placidus (*right*), two of his early youthful followers.

“Beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction. He made him like the saints in glory, and magnified him in the fear of his enemies, and with his words he made prodigies to cease. He glorified him in the sight of kings, and gave him commandments in the sight of his people, and showed him His glory. He sanctified him in his faith, and meekness, and chose him out of all flesh. For He heard him, and his voice, and brought him into a cloud. And He gave him commandments before His face, and a law of life and instruction.”

—Epistle, Common of a Holy Abbot
From *Ecclesiasticus* 45:1-6

NOTE

The Life of St. Benedict (480-547 A.D.) was written in Latin by St. Gregory the Great (540-604 A.D.). The text of the English translation is taken, with very few changes, from an old manuscript dated 1638.

CONTENTS

Introduction

Including The Vision of Anne Catherine Emmerich

Life of St. Benedict

By St. Gregory the Great

Conclusion

The Medal of St. Benedict

Prayers

INTRODUCTION

The life of St. Benedict is related to us by Pope St. Gregory the Great, who, being a relative of the great Patriarch and a member of his Order, was particularly qualified for this task. Pope Gregory was not personally acquainted with St. Benedict (c.480-c.547), as the latter died when Gregory (540-604) was but a young child. But he lived and associated with St. Benedict's disciples and was informed by them, as faithful eyewitnesses, of the life and deeds of this great man. Those who contributed to the facts recorded by Pope Gregory are the following: Abbot Constantine, first successor of St. Benedict in the monastery of Monte Cassino; Abbot Valentinian, who directed the monastery of the Lateran; Simplicius, third Abbot of Monte Cassino; and finally, Honoratus, who was Abbot of Subiaco at the time of St. Gregory. These are the commanding authorities to which he refers in portraying to us the life of the Patriarch of monks.

The Downfall of the Roman Empire

With regard to Church and State, never was the condition of Europe so sad and deplorable as at the time when St. Benedict was born. A total downfall of existing conditions had taken place; all bonds of order seemed dissolved, and civil laws and authorities done away with. More than ever was the Church infected with heresy and schism. The greater number of the European nations adopted the heresies of Arius, Nestorius and Eutyches. Some countries, such as Germany and England, were still in the darkness of paganism. The Roman empire, that gigantic union of two hundred million people under Emperor Augustus, was overthrown amid the invasions of the barbarous hordes from the North, who, penetrating into the heart of Europe, devastated the entire country and, spreading to the South and West, brought about that immense movement known in history as the migration of nations. In Italy alone, the Ostrogoths had founded a kingdom which was effectually governed by several kings, such as Theodoric the Great, Totila and others.

A Prey to Heresy and Barbarism

These unsteady conditions and ever-changing circumstances were most detrimental to the Church. The new barbarous tribes, it is true, embraced Christianity; nevertheless, they were to a great extent given to the Arian heresy, and thus the countries in which the first disciples of Christ had preached the Gospel became a prey to heresy and barbarism. It was, therefore, necessary that the world should be reconquered for Christ. And this enormous work of conversion was in great measure effected by St. Benedict, through the organization of his renowned Order of monks in the West. This holy Order God had chosen for His Church, in establishing the Christian world upon the ruins of the dilapidated Roman empire and in instructing and civilizing the new tribes unto Christ and Christian society. "It is wonderful," says a historian, "how Divine Providence has manifested its care for the Church by calling St. Benedict for this great work. Because at the very time when all Italy, France, Spain and the northern coast of Africa were in the possession of the Goths and Vandals, and almost the entire East was infected with heresy, in this frightful darkness, so bright a light shone forth from St. Benedict and his Order, that the whole world was thereby illumined."

St. Benedict of Noble Family

St. Benedict was born in the year 480, at Nursia, a city in southern Italy. He was descended from the Anicians, a noble Roman family which numbered among its members most renowned men: senators, generals and even saints. His father's name was Eupropius, his mother's Abundantia; his pious and holy twin sister, whom he cherished with tender affection his life long, was called Scholastica. Regarding the early years of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica little is known, but we rejoice in the possession of a beautiful "vision" of Anne Catherine Emmerich, which contains a very touching description of the childhood years of the twin brother and sister. For the edification and instruction of the reader, it is inserted here.

“Through the relics of St. Scholastica, I saw many scenes in her life and that of St. Benedict. I saw their paternal home in a great city, not far from Rome. It was not built entirely in the Roman style. Before it was a paved courtyard whose low wall was surmounted by a red latticework, and behind lay another court with a garden and a fountain. In the garden was a beautiful summer-house overrun with vines, and here I saw Benedict and his little sister Scholastica playing as loving, innocent children are wont to amuse themselves. The flat ceiling of the summer-house was painted all over with figures, which at first I thought sculptured, so clearly were their outlines defined.

“The brother and sister were very fond of each other and so nearly of the same age that I thought them twins. The birds flew in familiarly at the windows with flowers and twigs in their beaks and sat looking intently at the children, who were playing with flowers and leaves, planting sticks and making gardens. I saw them writing and cutting all sorts of figures out of colored stuffs. Occasionally their nurse came to look after them.

“Their parents seemed to be people of wealth, who had much business on hand, for I saw about twenty persons employed in the house; but they did not seem to trouble themselves about their children. The father was a large, powerful man, dressed in the Roman style; he took his meals with his wife and some other members of the family in the lower part of the house, while the children lived entirely upstairs in separate apartments. Benedict had for preceptor an old ecclesiastic with whom he stayed almost all the time, and Scholastica had a nurse near whom she slept. The brother and sister were not often allowed to be alone together, but whenever they could steal off for a while, they were very gleeful and happy. I saw Scholastica by her nurse’s side, learning some kind of work. In the room adjoining that in which she slept stood a table on which lay in baskets the material for her work, a variety of colored stuff, from which she cut figures of birds, flowers, etc., to be sewed on other larger pieces. When finished they looked as if carved on the groundwork.

“The ceilings of the rooms, like that of the summer-house, were covered with different colored pictures. The windows were not glass; they were of some kind of stuff on which were embroidered all sorts of figures, trees, lines, and pointed ornaments. Scholastica slept on a low bed behind a curtain. I saw her in the morning, when her nurse left the room, spring out of bed and prostrate in prayer before a crucifix on the wall. When she heard the nurse returning, she used to slip quickly behind the curtain and be in bed again before the nurse entered the room. I saw Benedict and Scholastica separately learning from the former’s tutor. They read from great rolls of parchment, and they painted letters in red, gold and an extraordinarily fine blue; as they wrote, they rolled the parchment. They made use of an instrument about as long as one’s finger. The older the children grew, the less were they allowed to be together.

“I saw Benedict at Rome, when about fourteen years old, in a large building in which there was a corridor with many rooms. It looked like a school or a monastery. There were many young men and some old ecclesiastics in a large hall, as if at a holiday feast. The ceilings were adorned with the same kind of paintings as those in Benedict’s home. The guests did not eat reclining. They sat on round seats so low that they were obliged to stretch out their feet; some sat on one side, back to back, at a very low table. There were holes hollowed in the massive table to receive the yellow plates and dishes; but I did not see much food, only three large plates of flat, yellow cakes in the center of the table.

“When all had finished, I saw six females of different ages, relatives of the youths, enter the hall, carrying something like sweetmeats and little flasks in baskets on their arms. The young men arose and conversed with their friends at one end of the hall, eating the dainties and drinking from the flasks. There was one woman about thirty years of age, whom I had once before seen at Benedict’s home. She approached the young man with an enticing mien; but he, perfectly innocent, suspected nothing bad in her. I saw that she hated his purity and entertained a sinful love for him. She gave him a poisoned, an enchanted drink from a flask. Benedict suspected nothing, but I saw him that evening in his cell, restless and tormented. He went, at last, to a man and asked permission to go down into the courtyard, for he never went out without leave. There he knelt in a corner of the yard, disciplining himself with long thorn branches and nettles. I saw him later on, when a hermit, helping this his would-be-seducer, who had fallen into deep distress precisely because she had sought to tempt him. Benedict had been interiorly warned of her guilt.

“Afterwards I saw Benedict on a high, rocky mountain, perhaps in his twentieth year. He had hollowed out a cell for himself in the rock. To this he added a passage and another cell, and then several cells, all cut in the rock; but only the first opened outside. Before it he had planted an avenue of trees. He arched them and ornamented the vaulted roof with pictures which seemed to be made of many small stones put together. In one cell I saw three such pictures: Heaven in the center, the nativity of Christ on one side, the Last Judgment on the other. In the last, Our Lord was represented sitting on an arch, a sword issuing from His mouth; below, between the elect and the reprobate, stood an angel with a pair of scales. Benedict had besides made a representation of a monastery with its abbot and crowds of monks in the background. He seemed to have had a foresight of his own monastery.

“More than once I saw Benedict’s sister, who lived at home, going on foot to visit her brother. He never allowed her to stay with him overnight. Sometimes she brought him a roll of parchment which she had written. Then he showed her what he

had done, and they conversed together on divine things. Benedict was always very grave in his sister's presence, while she, in her innocence, was mirthful and joyous. When she found him too serious, she turned to God in prayer, and he instantly became like herself, bright and gay.

"Later on, I saw her under her brother's direction, establishing a convent on a neighboring mountain, distant only a short day's journey. To it flocked numbers of religious women. I saw her teaching them to chant; they had no organs. Organs have been very prejudicial to singing. They make of it only a secondary affair. The nuns prepared all the church ornaments themselves in the same kind of needlework that Scholastica had learned when a child at home. On the refectory table was a large cloth on which were all sorts of figures, pictures and sentences, so that each religious always had before her that to which she was especially obliged. Scholastica spoke to me of the sweets and consolations of spiritual labor and the labor of ecclesiastics.

"I always saw Scholastica and Benedict surrounded by tame birds. While the former was yet in her father's house, I used to see doves flying from her to Benedict in the desert; and in the convent I saw around her doves and larks bringing her red, white, yellow and violet-blue flowers. Once I saw a dove bringing her a rose with a leaf. I cannot repeat all the scenes of her life that were shown me, for I am so sick and miserable! Scholastica was purity itself. I see her in Heaven as white as snow. With the exception of Mary and Magdalen, I know of no Saint so loving."

Thus far the "vision" of Anne Catherine Emmerich.

His Flight

The early years of Benedict were spent at the home of his parents. Even as a boy, he was distinguished for his earnestness and deep piety. St. Gregory relates of him that even in his youth he manifested the mind and disposition of a mature man, with morals far beyond his age; he despised the amusements of the world and never permitted his heart to be defiled by sensual pleasures.

When Benedict had passed his childhood years, his parents placed him in the schools of Rome to have him educated in the fine arts. But now came the turning point in his life. When he saw that many of his companions in the great metropolis were giving themselves up to vice and precipitating themselves into the abyss of destruction, he fled from the world and its corruption. God calling him to higher things and the dangers of the world prompting him to leave it, he quit Rome at the age of fourteen years to seek salvation and perfection in solitude.

Now let us hear what Gregory the Great relates.

THE LIFE OF ST. BENEDICT

From Book II of the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great

The Broken Sieve

Benedict left the schools and resolved to betake himself to the solitude, accompanied only by his nurse, who most tenderly loved him. Coming therefore to a place called Affile and remaining for some time in the church of St. Peter, at the charitable invitation of many virtuous people who lived there for devotion, so it chanced that his nurse borrowed of a neighbor a sieve to cleanse wheat, which, being left carelessly upon the table, was found broken in two pieces. Therefore on her return, finding it broken, she began to weep bitterly because it was only lent her. But the religious and pious boy, Benedict, seeing his nurse lament, was moved with compassion, and taking with him the two pieces of the broken sieve, with tears he gave himself to prayer, which, no sooner ended, he found the sieve whole and found not any sign that it had been broken. Then presently he restored the sieve whole to his nurse, to her exceeding comfort. This matter was divulged unto all that lived there about, and so much admired by all, that the inhabitants of that place caused the sieve to be hung up in the church porch, that not only those present, but all posterity might know with how great gifts of grace Benedict had been endowed from the beginning of his conversion. The sieve remained to be seen for many years after and hung over the church door even until the times of the Longobards.

But Benedict, more desirous to suffer afflictions than covetous of praise, and rather willing to undergo labors for the honor of God than to be extolled with the favors of this world, fled secretly from his nurse to a remote place in the desert called Subiaco, distant about forty miles from Rome.

St. Romanus Helps St. Benedict

As he was traveling to this place, a certain monk called Romanus met him and asked whither he was going. Having understood his intention, he both kept it secret and afforded him help; moreover, he gave him a religious habit and assisted him in all things. The man of God, being come to this place, lived for the space of three years in an obscure cave, unknown to any man except Romanus the monk. On certain days he would bring to Benedict a loaf of bread which he had spared from his own allowance. But, there being no way to the cave from Romanus' cell, by reason of a steep and high rock which hung over it, Romanus used to let down the loaf by a long cord to which also he fastened a little bell, that by the sound of it, the man of God might know when Romanus brought him the bread and, going out, might receive it. But the old enemy [Satan], envying the charity of the one and the refecton of the other, when on a certain day he beheld the bread let down in this manner, threw a stone and broke the bell. Notwithstanding, Romanus afterwards failed not to assist him in the best manner he was able.

The Easter Meal

Now when it pleased Almighty God that Romanus should rest from his labors, and that the life of Benedict should be manifest to the world for an example to all men, that the candle set upon a candlestick might shine and give light to the whole Church of God, Our Lord vouchsafed to appear to a certain priest living far off, who had made ready his dinner for Easter day, saying to him, "Thou hast prepared good cheer for thyself, and My servant in such a place is famished with hunger." Who presently rose up and, on the solemn day of Easter, went towards the place with such meat as he had provided for himself, where, seeking the man of God amongst craggy rocks, winding valleys and hollow pits, he found him hid in a cave. Then, after prayers and blessing the Almighty Lord, they sat down, and after some spiritual discourse the priest said, "Rise, and let us take our refecton, for this is Easter day." To whom the man of God answered, "I know it is Easter, because I have found so much favor as to see thee" (for, not having a long time conversed with men, he did not know it was Easter day). The good priest did therefore again affirm it, saying, "Truly, this is the day of Our Lord's Resurrection, and therefore it is not fit that you should

keep abstinence, and for this cause I am sent, that we may eat together that which Almighty God hath bestowed on us.” Whereupon, blessing God, they took their meal, and when the discourse and dinner were ended, the priest returned to his church.

About the same time, certain shepherds found him hid in a cave; who at first, spying him among the bushes, clothed in the skins of beasts, took him for some wild animal, but afterwards knowing him to be a man of God, many of them were converted from their savage life to virtue. By this means his life began to be famous in the country, and many did resort unto him, bringing with them necessaries for his body, while they received from his lips the food of life.

How He Overcame a Temptation Of the Flesh

The holy man, being on a certain day alone, the tempter was at hand; for a little black bird, commonly called thrush, began to fly about his face, and that so near that the holy man, if he would, might have taken it with his hand; but no sooner had he made the Sign of the Cross, than the bird vanished. When presently so great a carnal temptation assailed him that the holy man had never before felt the like. For the remembrance of a woman which sometime he had seen was so lively presented to his fancy by the wicked spirit, and so vehemently did her image inflame his breast with lustful desires, that almost overcome by pleasure, he was determining to leave the wilderness. But, suddenly assisted by divine grace, he came to himself, and seeing near him a thicket full of nettles and briars, he threw off his garments and cast himself naked into the midst of those sharp thorns and nettles, where he rolled himself so long, that when he rose up, his body was pitifully rent. Thus, by the wounds of his flesh he cured those of his soul. And after that time, as he himself related to his disciples, he was so free from the like temptation that he never felt any such motion.

Henceforth, many began to forsake the world to place themselves under his government. Being now altogether free from vice, he worthily deserved to be made a master of virtue.

How St. Benedict Broke a Glass By the Sign of the Cross

Not far off was a monastery, whose abbot being dead, the whole convent repaired to the venerable man Benedict and, with earnest persuasions requested him to be their abbot, which he refused for a long time, forewarning them that his manner of life and theirs would not agree; yet at length, overcome with importunity, he gave his consent. But when in the same monastery he began to observe regular discipline, the monks fell into a great rage and began therefore to plot his death, and after consultation, they poisoned his wine. So when the glass which contained the poisoned drink was, according to the custom of the monastery, presented at table to be blessed by the abbot, Benedict putting forth his hand and making the Sign of the Cross, the glass, which was held far off, broke in pieces as if he had thrown a stone against it. By this the man of God perceived that the glass had in it the drink of death which could not endure the sign of life. So presently rising up, with a mild countenance and tranquil mind, having called the brethren together, he thus spake unto them: “Almighty God in His mercy forgive you brethren; why have you dealt thus with me? Did I not foretell you that my manner of life and yours would not agree? Go and seek a superior to your liking, for you can have me no longer with you.” This said, he forthwith returned to the solitude he loved so well and lived there by himself in the sight of Him who seeth all things.

St. Benedict Receives St. Maurus And St. Placidus

The holy man for many years in that desert increased wonderfully in virtues and miracles, whereby a great number in those parts were gathered together in the service of Almighty God, so that, by the assistance of Our Lord Jesus Christ, he built there twelve monasteries, in each of which he put twelve monks with their superiors, and retained a few with himself, whom he thought to instruct further.

Now began diverse noble and devout personages from Rome to resort to him and commended their children to be brought up by him in the service of Almighty God. At the same time Equitius brought unto him Maurus, and Tertullus, a senator,

brought his son Placidus, both very promising children, of which two, Maurus, although young, yet by reason of his progress in the school of virtue, began to assist his master, but Placidus was as yet a child of tender years.

St. Benedict Punishes The Indevout Monk

In one of those monasteries which he had built nearby was a certain monk who could not stay at his prayers, but as soon as he saw his brethren kneel and dispose themselves for their mental prayer, he would go out and there give his wandering thoughts to worldly and transitory things. For which, having been often admonished by his abbot, he was brought before the man of God, who also sharply reprimanded him for his folly; but returning to his monastery, he scarcely remembered two days what the man of God had said to him, for the third day he fell to his old custom, and at the time of prayer went out again; whereof, when the servant of God was informed, he said, “I will come myself and reform him.” And when he was come to the same monastery, and the brethren, after the psalms ended, at the accustomed time betook themselves to prayer, he perceived a little black boy who pulled this monk (who could not remain at his prayers) out by the hem of his garment. This he insinuated secretly to Pompeianus, abbot of the monastery, and to Maurus, “See you not there who it is that draweth this monk out?” Who answered, “No.” “Let us pray,” replied he, “that you may likewise see whom this monk followeth.” After prayer continued for two days, Maurus the monk saw, but Pompeianus the abbot of the monastery could not perceive anything. The next day, when the man of God had finished his prayer, he went out of the oratory and found the monk standing without, whom he forthwith struck with a wand, and from that time ever after the monk was free from the wicked suggestions of the black boy and remained constant at his prayers. For the old enemy, as if he himself had been beaten with the whip, dared no more to take command of his thoughts.

The Spring on the Top Of the Mountain

Three of the monasteries which he founded in that place were built upon the cliffs of a mountain, and it was very troublesome to the monks always to be forced to descend to the lake to carry up their water, for on account of the steepness of the mountainsides, it was very difficult and dangerous to descend. Hereupon, the brethren of these three monasteries came all together to the servant of God, Benedict, saying, “It is very troublesome to us to have to go daily down for water as far as the lake, and therefore the monasteries must of necessity be removed to some more commodious place.” He dismissed them with comforting words, and at night with little Placidus, whom we mentioned before, he went up to the rock and there prayed a long time. Having ended his prayers, he put three stones for a mark in the same place, and so unknown to all, he returned to his monastery. Next day, when the brethren came again to him for want of water, he said, “Go, and on the rock where you shall find three stones one upon another, dig a little, for Almighty God is able to make water spring from the top of that mountain, that you may be eased of this labor.” When they had made a hollow in that place, it was immediately filled with water, which issued forth so plentifully that to this day it continueth, running down to the foot of the mountain.

The Goth Who Lost His Ax

At another time, a certain Goth, poor in spirit, desiring to lead a religious life, repaired to the man of God, Benedict, who most willingly received him. One day he ordered an ax to be given to him to cut brambles in a place which he intended for a garden. This place which the Goth had undertaken to prepare was over the lake’s side. While the Goth labored amain in cutting up the thick briars, the iron, slipping out of the handle, fell into the lake in a place so deep that there was no hope of recovering it. The Goth, having lost his ax, ran trembling to the monk Maurus and told him the mischance, confessing his fault penitently, who presently informed Benedict, the servant of God thereof. Immediately, the man of God came himself to the lake, took the handle out of the Goth’s hand and cast it into the lake, when behold, the iron rose up from the bottom and entered into the handle as before. Which he there rendered to the Goth, saying, “Behold! Work on and be not discomforted.”

How His Disciple Maurus Walked on the Water

One day as venerable Benedict was in his cell, the aforesaid young Placidus, a monk of the holy man, went out to the lake to get water and, letting down the bucket to take up water, by chance fell in himself after it and was presently carried away by the stream. This accident was at the same time revealed to the man of God in his cell, who quickly called Maurus, saying, "Run, Brother Maurus, for the child who went to get water has fallen into the lake, and the stream hath carried him a great way." A wonderful thing and not heard of since the time of Peter the Apostle! Maurus, having asked and received his benediction, upon the command of his superior, went forth in haste, and being come to the place to which the child was driven by the stream, thinking he still went on dry land, he ran upon the water, took him by the hair of the head and returned speedily back. No sooner had he set foot upon firm ground when he came to himself and, perceiving that he had gone upon the water, was much astonished and wondered how he had done that.

So, returning to his superior, he related what had happened, which the venerable man Benedict ascribed to Maurus' prompt obedience, and not to his own merits; but contrariwise, Maurus attributed it wholly to his command, not imputing any virtue to himself in that which he had done unwittingly. This humble and charitable contention the child Placidus, who was saved, was to decide, for he said, "When I was drawn out of the water, I saw my abbot's garments over my head and imagined that he had drawn me out."

Of the Poisoned Loaf Which the Crow Carried Away

When, as now, the places far and wide were very zealous in the love of Our Lord God, Jesus Christ, many abandoned the vanities of the world and put themselves under the sweet yoke of our Redeemer. As it is the custom of the wicked to repine at the virtues of others, which they themselves desire not to follow, one Florentius, a heretical Arian priest of a church nearby, began, by the instigation of the devil, to be envious of the virtuous proceedings of the holy man and also hindered as many as he could from resorting to him. But seeing that he could not stop his progress, the fame of his virtues still more increasing, and many upon the report of his sanctity reforming their lives daily, he became more and more envious and constantly grew worse, for he desired for himself the commendations of Benedict's life. Thus blinded by envy, he sent to the servant of Almighty God a poisoned loaf for an offering, which the man of God received thankfully, although he was not ignorant of the poison in it.

There used to come to him at the time of dinner a crow from the adjacent forest, which took bread from his hand. Coming therefore, as she was wont, the man of God cast before her the bread that the priest had sent him, saying, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, take this bread and cast it in some place where no man may find it." The crow, gaping and spreading her wings, ran croaking about it, as if she would have said, I would willingly fulfill thy command, but I am not able. The man of God commanded again, saying, "Take it up, take it up, and cast it where no man can find it." So at length the crow took it up in her beak and flew away with it, and three hours after returned again to receive from his hand her ordinary allowance. The venerable Father, seeing the priest so perversely bent on seeking his life, was more sorry for him than grieved for himself.

When the aforesaid Florentius saw that he could not kill the body of his master, he attempted to do harm to the souls of his disciples. Therefore, he sent seven naked girls into the garden of the cloister where Benedict lived, that playing for a long time hand in hand, they might entice their souls to sinful desires. When the holy man noticed them from his cell, to prevent the fall of his younger disciples, and considering that all this was done only for the persecution of himself, he left in the monastery a competent number of brethren with superiors, taking with him only a few monks, and removed to another place.

Thus the man of God, with humility, avoided the hatred of the unfortunate priest, whom Almighty God struck with a terrible judgment; for when the aforesaid priest, standing in his summer-house, heard to his great joy that Benedict was gone, the room wherein he was fell down and crushed and killed the enemy of Benedict, the rest of the house, however, remaining intact. This, Maurus, the disciple of the man of God, thought fit to signify forthwith to the venerable Father Benedict, who was yet scarce gone ten miles, saying, "Return, for the priest that did persecute you is slain." Which the man of God, hearing, took very heavily, both because his enemy was dead and because his disciple rejoiced thereat. Whereupon he enjoined him a penance for presuming in a joyful manner to bring such news to him.

The castle called Cassino is situated upon the side of a high mountain which riseth in the air about three miles high so that the top seemeth to touch the very heavens. On Monte Cassino stood an old temple where Apollo was worshiped by the foolish country people, according to the custom of the ancient heathen. Round about it, likewise, grew groves, in which even until that time, the mad multitude of infidels offered their idolatrous sacrifices. The man of God, coming to that place, broke down the idol, overthrew the altar, burnt the groves and of the temple of Apollo made a chapel of St. Martin; and where the profane altar had stood, he built a chapel of St. John and, by continual preaching, converted many of the people thereabout.

But the old enemy, not bearing this silently, did present himself in the sight of the Father and with great cries complained of the violence he suffered, in so much that the brethren heard him, though they could see nothing. For, as the venerable Father told his disciples, the wicked fiend represented himself to his sight all on fire and, with flaming mouth and flashing eyes, seemed to rage against him. And then they all heard what he said, for first he called him by name, and when the man of God would make him no answer, he fell to reviling him. And whereas before he cried, “Benedict, Benedict,” and saw he could get no answer, then he cried, “Maledict, not Benedict,* what hast thou to do with me, and why dost thou persecute me?”

Of the Phantom Fire That Burned the Kitchen

Then the man of God considered it best that they should dig in that place. When they had reached a good depth, the brethren found a brazen idol, which for the time being was thrown into the kitchen. Suddenly, there seemed a flame to rise out of it, and to the sight of all the monks it appeared that all the kitchen was on fire. As they were casting on water to quench this fire, the man of God, hearing the tumult, came, and perceiving that there appeared fire to the eyes of the brethren and not to his, he forthwith bowed his head in prayer and calling upon those whom he saw deluded with an imaginary fire, he bade them sign their eyes that they might behold the kitchen and not those phantom flames which the enemy had counterfeited.

How a Boy, Crushed by the Fall Of a Wall, was Healed by The Servant of God

Again, when the brethren were raising the wall a little higher for more convenience, the man of God was at his devotion in his cell, to whom the old enemy appeared in an insulting manner and told him he was going to his brethren at work. The man of God, straightway by a messenger, informed the brethren thereof, saying, “Brethren, have a care of yourself, for the wicked spirit at this hour is coming to molest you.” Scarce had the messenger told this errand when the malignant spirit overthrew the wall that was being built, and with the fall thereof, crushed a young monk, the son of a senator. Hereat all of them were much grieved and discomforted and brought the sad tidings to their venerable Father Benedict, who bade them bring the boy to him, who could not be carried but in a sheet, by reason that not only his body was bruised but also his bones were crushed by the fall. Then the man of God willed them to lay him in his cell upon his mat where he used to pray; so causing the brethren to go out, he shut the door and with more than ordinary devotion fell to his prayers. A wonder to hear, the very same hour he sent him to his work again, whole and sound as ever he was before, to help his brethren in making up the wall.

Of Monks Who Had Eaten Out of Their Monastery

Now began the man of God, by the spirit of prophecy, to foretell things to come, and to know things that had passed. It was the custom of the monastery that the brethren, sent abroad about any business, should neither eat nor drink anything outside the cloister. This, in the practice of the rule, being carefully observed, one day some brethren upon occasion went abroad and were forced to stay later than usual, so that they rested and refreshed themselves in the house of a very devout woman of their acquaintance.

Returning late to the monastery, they asked, as was the custom, the abbot’s blessing, of whom he straightway demanded, saying, “Where dined you?” They answered, “Nowhere.” To whom he said, “Why do you lie? Did you not go into such a woman’s house? Ate you not there such and such meats? Drank you not so many cups?” When the venerable Father had told

them both the woman's lodging, the several sorts of meats with the number of their draughts, they in great terror fell down at his feet and, with acknowledgment of all that they had done, confessed their fault. But he straightway pardoned them, persuading himself they would never afterwards attempt the like in his absence, knowing he was always present with them in spirit.

How the Man of God by His Prayers Removed a Huge Stone

One day, as the brethren were building the cells of the cloister, there lay a stone in the midst, which they determined to lift up and put into the building. When two or three were not able to move it, they set more to it, but it remained as immovable as if it had been held by roots to the ground, so that it was easy to conceive that the old enemy sat upon it, since so many men were not able to lift it. After much labor in vain, they sent for the man of God to help them by his prayers to drive away the enemy; he presently came, and having first prayed, he gave his blessing; when behold, the stone was as easily lifted as if it had no weight at all!

How He Discovered the Dissimulation of King Totila

In the time of the Goths, their king, informed that the holy man had the gift of prophecy, went towards his monastery and made some stay a little way off and gave notice of his coming. To whom answer was made from the monastery that he might come at his pleasure. The king, being of a treacherous nature, attempted to try whether the man of God had the spirit of prophecy. There was one of his guards called Riggo, upon whom he caused his own buskins to be put and commanded him, taking on him the king's person, to go forward to the man of God, three of his chief pages attending upon him: to wit, Vulderic, Ruderic and Blindin, to the end that they should wait upon him in the presence of the servant of God, so that, by reason of his attendants and purple robes, he might be taken for the king. When the said Riggo, with his brave apparel and attendants, entered the cloister, the man of God sat a little distance off, and seeing him come so nigh as he might hear him, he cried out to him, saying, "Put off, son, put off that which thou wearest, for it is not thine." Riggo straightway fell to the ground and was much afraid for having presumed to delude so holy a man; all his followers likewise fell down astonished, and rising, they dared not approach unto him, but returned to their king and, trembling, related unto him how soon they were discovered.

How He Reproved The Brother of Valentinian The Monk for Eating by the Way

Moreover, the brother of Valentinian the monk was very devout, although but a secular; and he used to go to the monastery from his dwelling once every year, and that fasting, that he might partake of the prayers of the servant of God and see his brother. As he was on his way to the monastery, another traveler who carried meat with him put himself into his company. After they had traveled a good while, he said to him, "Come, brother, let us refresh ourselves, lest we faint by the way." "God forbid!" answered the brother; "by no means, Brother, for my custom is always to go to the venerable Father Benedict fasting." At which answer his fellow traveler, for the present, said no more; but when they had gone a little farther, he moved him again to eat, but he would not consent because he resolved to keep his fast. So the other was silent a while, and went forward with him without taking anything himself. After they had gone a great way, wearied with long travel, on their way they came to a meadow and a spring, a delightful place to take their repast.

Then said the fellow traveler, "So! Here is water, here is a meadow, here is a pleasant place for us to refresh and rest us a while, that we may safely make an end of our journey." So at the third motion, these words pleasing his ear and the place his eye, he was overcome, consented and ate. In the evening he came to the monastery, where, conducted to the venerable Father Benedict, he craved his prayers, but soon the holy man reproved him for what he had done on the way, saying, "What was it, Brother, that the malignant enemy suggested to thee by thy fellow traveler? The first time he could not persuade, nor yet the second, but the third time he prevailed and obtained his desire." Then the man, acknowledging his fault, fell at his feet and began to weep bitterly and to be ashamed.

How He Prophetied to King Totila And to the Bishop of Canosa

Then Totila came himself to the man of God, whom, as soon as he saw sitting afar off, he dared not come nigh, but fell prostrate to the ground. The holy man twice or thrice bade him rise, but he dared not get up. Then Benedict, the servant of Christ Our Lord, deigned himself to come to the prostrate king, whom, raising from the ground, he rebuked for his deeds and foretold in a few words all that should befall him, saying, "Much evil dost thou do, and much wickedness hast thou done; at least now give up thy iniquity. Into Rome shalt thou enter, thou wilt cross over the sea; nine years shalt thou reign and die the tenth." At the hearing whereof, the King, sorely appalled, craved his prayers and departed, but from that time he was less cruel. Not long after he went to Rome, sailed thence to Sicily and, in the tenth year of his reign, by the judgment of Almighty God, lost both crown and life.

Moreover, the bishop of the church of Canosa used to come to the servant of God, who much loved him for his virtuous life. He [the bishop], therefore, conferring with him concerning the coming of King Totila and the taking of the city of Rome, said, "The city doubtless will be destroyed by this king, so that it will never more be inhabited." To whom the man of God replied, "Rome shall never be destroyed by the pagans, but shall be so shaken by tempests, lightnings and earthquakes that it will decay of itself." The mysteries of which prophecy we now behold as clear as day, for in this city we see the walls ruined, houses overturned, churches destroyed by tempestuous winds, and buildings rotten with age, decay and fall into ruins. Although Honoratus his disciple, from whose relation I had it, told me he heard it not himself from his own mouth but was told it by the brethren.

How St. Benedict Discovered the Hiding of a Flagon of Wine

Our monk Exhilaratus was once sent by his master with two wooden vessels, which we call flagons, full of wine, to the man of God in his monastery. He brought one, but hid the other on the way; notwithstanding, the man of God, although he was not ignorant of anything done in his absence, received it thankfully, and advised the monk as he was returning back, in this manner: "Take care, son, that thou drink not of that flagon which thou hast hid, but turn the mouth of it downwards, and then thou wilt perceive what is in it." He departed from the holy man much ashamed and, desirous of making further trial of what he had heard, held the flagon downwards, and presently there came forth a snake, at which the monk was sorely affrighted and terrified for the evil he had committed.

How Ven. Benedict Dispossessed A Certain Cleric of the Devil

At that time one of the clergy of the church of Aquin was molested with an evil spirit, and this cleric, the venerable man Constantius, bishop of that diocese, had sent to diverse martyrs' shrines to be cured; but the holy martyrs would not cure him, that the gifts of grace in Benedict might be made manifest. He was, therefore, brought to the servant of Almighty God, Benedict, who, by pouring forth prayers to Our Lord Jesus Christ, presently drove out the enemy. Having cured him, he commanded him, saying, "Go! And hereafter never eat flesh, and presume not to take Holy Orders, for what time soever you shall presume to take Holy Orders, you shall again become a slave to the devil." The cleric, therefore, went his way healed; and as present punishments made deep impressions, he carefully for a while observed the command of the man of God. But when, after many years, all his seniors were dead, and he saw his juniors preferred before him in Holy Orders, he neglected the words of the man of God, as though forgotten through length of time, and took upon him Holy Orders; whereupon presently the devil, who before had left him, took power of him, and never ceased to torment him till he severed his soul from his body.

How He Prophetied the Destruction Of His Monastery

A certain nobleman named Theoprobis was by the admonition of Father Benedict converted, and for the merit of his life was very familiar and intimate with him. He, one day entering into the cell of the man of God, found him weeping bitterly;

when he had waited a long while, and saw he did not cease (though it was his custom in prayer mildly to weep and not to use any doleful lamentations), he boldly demanded of him the cause of so great grief. To whom the man of God presently replied, “All this monastery which I have built, with whatsoever I have prepared for my brethren, are, by the judgment of Almighty God, delivered over to the heathen; and I could scarce obtain from God to save the lives of those in this place.”

His words Theoprobus heard, but we see them verified in the destruction of his monastery by the Longobards. For of late these Lombards, by night, when the brethren were at rest, entered the monastery and ransacked all, yet had not the power to lay hand on any man. But Almighty God fulfilled what He had promised to His faithful servant Benedict, that although He gave their goods into the hands of Paynims [pagans], yet He preserved their lives.

The Two Hundred Measures of Meal Found Before the Monastery Gates

At another time, also in the country of Campania, began a great famine, and all people suffered from great scarcity of food, so that all the wheat in Benedict’s monastery was used, and likewise almost all the bread, so that but five loaves remained for the brethren’s refecton. When the venerable Father perceived them sad, he endeavored by a mild and gentle reproach to reprehend their pusillanimity and with fair promises to comfort them, saying, “Why is your soul sad for want of bread? Today you are in want, but tomorrow you shall have plenty.” The next day there were found two hundred sacks of meal before the monastery gates; by whom God Almighty sent it, as yet no man knoweth. Which, when the monks beheld, they gave thanks to God.

How the Man of God Reproved a Monk For Receiving Certain Napkins

Not far distant from the monastery was a certain town in which no small number of people, by the exhortations of Benedict, were converted from the worship of idols to the faith of God. In that place were certain religious women, and the servant of God, Benedict, used to send often some of his brethren thither to instruct and edify their souls. One day, as his custom was, he appointed one to go; but the monk who was sent, after his exhortation, by the entreaty of the nuns took some small napkins and hid them in his bosom. As soon as he came back, the man of God began very sharply to rebuke him, saying, “How hath iniquity entered thy breast?” The monk was amazed, and because he had forgotten what he had done, he wondered why he was so reprehended. To whom the holy Father said, “What! was not I present when thou tookest the napkins of the handmaids of God and didst put them in thy bosom?” Whereupon he presently fell at his feet and, repenting of his folly, threw away the napkins which he had hid in his bosom.

How the Servant of God Understood the Proud Thought Of One of His Monks

One day late in the evening, as the venerable Father was at his repast, it happened that one of his monks, the son of a lawyer, held the candle for him; and while the man of God was eating, he, standing in that manner, began by the suggestion of pride to say within himself, “Who is he whom I should wait upon at table, or hold the candle unto with such attendance? Who am I who should serve him?” To whom the man of God, presently turning, checked him sharply, saying, “Sign thy breast, Brother; what is this you say? Sign thy breast.” Then he forthwith called upon the brethren and willed them to take the candle out of his hand and bade him for that time to leave his attendance and sit down quietly by him. The monk, being asked afterward by the brethren concerning his thoughts at that time, told them how he was puffed up with a spirit of pride and what he spake against the man of God secretly in his own heart. By this it was easily to be perceived that nothing could be kept from the knowledge of venerable Benedict, in whose ears the words of unspoken thoughts resounded.

How, By a Vision, He Gave Order to Construct The Monastery of Terracina

At another time, he was requested by a certain devout man to send some of his disciples to build a monastery on his estate near the city of Terracina, to which request he consented and sent some monks, appointing an abbot and prior over them. As they were setting forward, he promised, saying, “Go, and upon such a day I will come and show you where to build the oratory, where the refectory and lodging for the guests, or what else shall be necessary.” So they received his blessing and departed, hoping to see him at the appointed day, for which they prepared all things they thought fit and necessary for their Father and his company.

The night before the appointed day the man of God appeared in sleep to him whom he had constituted abbot, and to his prior, and described to them most exactly how he would have the building ordered. When they awoke, they related to each other what they had seen; yet not altogether relying on that vision, they expected the man of God according to his promise; but seeing he came not at his appointed time, they returned to him very pensive, saying, “We have expected, Father, your coming as you promised, but you came not to show us where and what we should build.” To whom he said, “Why, brethren, why do you say so? Did I not come according to my promise?”

And when they said, “When came you?” he replied, “Did I not appear to each of you in your sleep and describe every place? Go, and according to the direction given you in that vision construct the monastery.” Hearing this they were much astonished, and so, returning to the manor, they erected the whole building according to the revelation.

Of the Boy Cured of the Leprosy

But I must not pass over in silence what I heard of a very honorable man named Anthony, who affirmed that a servant of his father fell a prey to leprosy, insomuch that his hair fell out and his skin was swollen, so that he could no longer hide the increase of his disease. Being sent by the gentle man’s father to the man of God, he was quickly restored by him to his former health.

How St. Benedict Miraculously Procured Money for a Poor Man To Discharge His Debt

Nor will I conceal that which his disciple Peregrine was wont to relate: how on a certain day an honest man, constrained by the necessity of a debt, thought his only remedy was to have recourse to the man of God and acquaint him with his necessity. Therefore, he came to the monastery, where, finding the servant of Almighty God, he told him how he was extremely urged by his creditor for the payment of twelve shillings. The venerable Father answered him that in very deed he had not twelve shillings, but yet he comforted his want with good words, saying, “Go, and after two days return hither again, for today I have it not to give thee.” These two days, as his custom was, he spent in prayer, and on the third day, when the poor debtor came again, thirteen shillings were found in the monastery upon a chest that was full of corn. These the man of God caused to be brought him, and gave them to the distressed man, saying that he might pay twelve and have one to defray his charges.

How a Glass Bottle was Cast Down Upon the Stones and Not Broken

At that time when the great famine was in Campania, the man of God gave all he had in his monastery to those in want, insomuch that there was almost nothing left in the cellar save only a little oil in a glass vessel. When Agapitus, a sub-deacon, came earnestly entreating to have a little oil given him, the man of God (who had resolved to give all upon earth that he might have all in Heaven) commanded this little oil that was left to be given him. The monk who was cellarer heard his command, but was loath to fulfill it. The holy man a little while after demanded whether he had done what he willed him, and the monk answered that he had not given it, because if he had given it, there would be nothing left for the brethren.

Hereat much displeased, the good Father bade another take the glass bottle in which there remained a little oil and cast

it out the window, to the end that nothing of the fruits of disobedience might remain in the monastery. This was accordingly done. Under the window was a steep descent, full of huge rough stones, upon which the glass fell, yet it remained as whole and entire as if it had not been thrown down, so that neither was the glass broken nor the oil spilled. Then the man of God commanded it to be taken up and given to him that asked it. Then calling the brethren together, he rebuked the disobedient monk before them for his pride and unfaithfulness.

How an Empty Barrel was Filled with Oil

After this rebuke, he and all the brethren fell to their prayers. In the place where they prayed was an empty oil barrel. As the holy man continued his prayer, the cover of the said barrel began to be heaved up by the oil increasing under it, which ran over the brim of the vessel upon the floor in great abundance. Which as soon as the servant of God, Benedict, beheld, he forthwith ended his prayer, and the oil ceased to run over. Then he admonished the distrustful and disobedient brother to have confidence and learn humility. So the brother, thus reprehended, was much ashamed because the venerable Father had by his admonition and by his miracle shown the power of Almighty God, for a bottle of oil.

How He Delivered A Monk From the Devil

One day as he was going to St. John's oratory, which stands upon the very top of the mountain, he met the old enemy upon a mule in the habit and guise of a physician, carrying a horn and a mortar; who, being demanded whither he went, answered he was going to the monks to minister a drink. Thereupon the venerable Father Benedict went forward to the chapel to pray and, having finished, returned back in great haste, for the wicked spirit found one of the senior monks drawing water, and presently he entered into him, threw him on the ground and tortured him unmercifully. As soon as the man of God, returning from prayer, found him thus cruelly tormented, he only gave him a blow on the cheek with his hand and immediately drove the wicked spirit out of him, so that he never dared to return again.

The Terrible Goth

A certain Goth, named Galla, was of the impious sect of the Arians. This terrible Goth, during the reign of King Totila, did with monstrous cruelty persecute religious men of the Catholic Church. If any cleric or monk came into his sight, he was sure not to escape from his hands alive. This man, enraged with an insatiable desire of spoil and pillage, lighted one day upon a husbandman, whom he tormented with cruel torments. The rustic, overcome with pain, professed that he had committed his goods to the custody of the servant of God, Benedict. This he feigned that he might free himself from torments and prolong his life for some time. Then this Galla desisted from tormenting him and, tying his arms together with a strong cord, made him run before his horse to show him who this Benedict was that had received his goods.

Thus the man went in front, having his arms bound, and brought him to the holy man's monastery, whom he found sitting alone at the monastery gate, reading. Then the countryman said to Galla, who followed furiously after him, "See! This is Father Benedict whom I told you of." The barbarous ruffian, looking upon him with enraged fury, thought to affright him with his usual threats, and began to cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Rise, rise and deliver up this rustic's goods which thou hast received." At whose voice the man of God suddenly lifted up his eyes from reading and saw him and also the countryman whom he kept bound; but, as he cast his eyes upon his arms, in a wonderful manner the cords fell off so quickly that no man could possibly have so soon untied them.

When Galla perceived the man whom he brought bound so suddenly loosened and at liberty, struck with fear at the sight of so great power, he fell prostrate and bowed his stiff and cruel neck at the holy man's feet, begging his prayers. But the holy man rose not from his reading, but called upon the brethren to bring him to receive his benediction. When he was brought to him, he exhorted him to leave off his barbarous and inhuman cruelty.

How He Raised a Child From the Dead

As he was laboring in the field one day with his brethren, a certain peasant came to the monastery carrying in his arms the dead body of his son and, pitifully lamenting his loss, asked for the holy Father Benedict. When they said that he was in the field, he presently laid down the dead body of his son at the monastery gate and, as one distracted with grief, began running to find the venerable Father. At the same time the man of God was coming home with his brethren from the field, whom, when the distressed man espied, he began to cry out, "Restore me my son, restore me my son!" "What! Have I taken your son from you?" To whom the man replied, "He is dead, come and raise him." When the servant of God heard this, he was much grieved and said, "Go, brethren, go! This is not a work for us, but for such as were the holy Apostles. Why will you impose burdens upon us which we cannot bear?"

Notwithstanding, the man, enforced by excessive grief, persisted in his petition, swearing that he would not depart unless he raised his son to life. Then the servant of God inquired, saying, "Where is he?" He answered, "Lo, his body lieth at the monastery gate!" Whither, when the man of God with his brethren had come, he knelt down and laid himself on the body of the child; then, raising himself and with his hands lifted up towards Heaven, he prayed, "O Lord, regard not my sins but the faith of this man who craveth to have his son restored to life, and restore again to this body the soul which Thou hast taken from it." Scarcely had he finished these words when the body of the boy began to tremble at the re-entry of the soul, so that in the sight of all who were present he was seen with wonderful quaking to pant and breathe. Whom he presently took by the hand and delivered alive and sound to his father.

Of the Miracle Wrought By His Sister Scholastica

I must tell you a passage concerning the venerable Father Benedict, that there was something he desired and was not able to accomplish. His sister Scholastica, who was consecrated to God from her very childhood, used to come once a year to see him; unto whom the man of God was wont to go to a house not far from the gate, within the possession of the monastery. Thither she came one day according to her custom, and her venerable brother likewise with his disciples; where, after they had spent the whole day in the praise of God and pious discourses, the night drawing on, they took their refectio together. As they were yet sitting at table and protracting the time with holy conference, the religious woman, his sister, entreated him, saying, "I beseech you, leave me not this night, that we may talk until morning of the joys of the heavenly life." To whom he answered, "What is this you say, sister? By no means can I stay out of my monastery."

At this time the sky was serene, and not a cloud was to be seen in the air. The holy woman, therefore, hearing her brother's refusal, clasped her hands together upon the table, and bowing her head upon them, she prayed to Almighty God. As she raised up her head from the table, there began such vehement lightning and thunder, with such abundance of rain, that neither venerable Benedict nor his brethren were able to put foot out of doors. For the holy woman, when she leaned her head upon her hands, poured forth a flood of tears upon the table, by which she changed the fair weather into foul and rainy.

Then the man of God, perceiving that by reason of thunder and lightning, with continual showers of rain, he could not possibly return to his monastery, was sad and began to complain, saying, "God Almighty forgive you, sister, what is this you have done?" To whom she made answer, "I prayed you to stay and you would not hear me: I prayed to Almighty God and He heard me. Now, therefore, if you can, go forth to the monastery and leave me." But he, not able to go forth, was forced to stay against his will. Thus it happened that they spent the night in watching, and received full content in spiritual discourse of heavenly matters.

In What Manner St. Benedict Saw the Soul of His Sister Go Forth from Her Body

The next day the venerable woman returned to her cloister and the man of God to his monastery. When behold, three days after, while standing in his cell, he saw the soul of his sister depart out of her body and, in the form of a dove, ascend and enter into the celestial mansions. Who rejoicing much to see her great glory, gave thanks to God Almighty in hymns and praises, and announced her death to the brethren, whom he forthwith sent to bring her body to the monastery, and caused it to be buried in the same tomb that he had prepared for himself. By means of this it happened that, as their minds were always one in God, so also their bodies were not separated in their burial.

How the Whole World was Represented Before His Eyes, and the Soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua

Another time, Servandus, deacon and abbot of that monastery which was built in Campania by Liberius, once a senator, used often to visit him, for being also illuminated with grace and heavenly doctrine, he repaired diverse times to the monastery that they might mutually communicate one to another and, at least with sighs and longing desires, taste of that sweet food of the celestial country whose perfect fruition they were not as yet permitted to enjoy. When it was time to go to rest, venerable Benedict went up to the top of the tower in the lower part of which Servandus the deacon had his lodging and from which there was an open passage to ascend to the higher. While as yet the monks were at rest, the man of God, Benedict, being diligent in watching, rose up before the night office and stood at the window making his prayer to Almighty God about midnight, when suddenly, looking forth, he saw a light from above so bright and resplendent that it not only dispersed the darkness of the night, but shone clearer than the day itself. Upon this sight a marvelous, strange thing followed, for as he afterwards related, the whole world, contracted as it were together, was represented to his eyes in one ray of light.

As the venerable Father had his eyes fixed upon this glorious lustre, he beheld the soul of Germanus, bishop of Capua, carried by angels to Heaven in a fiery globe. Then, for the testimony of so great a miracle, with a loud voice he called upon Servandus the deacon twice or thrice by his name, who, troubled at such an unusual crying out of the man of God, came up, looked forth and saw a little stream of light then disappearing, and wondered greatly at this miracle. Whereupon the man of God told him all that he had seen and sent presently to Theoprobis, a religious man in the town of Cassino, ordering him to go the same night to Capua and learn what had happened to Germanus, the bishop. It happened so that he who was sent found the most reverend Bishop Germanus dead, and on inquiring more exactly, he learned that his departure was the very same moment in which the man of God had seen him ascend.

Of a Monk Who, Leaving His Monastery, Met a Dragon on the Way

One of his monks, of a wavering and inconstant disposition, would by no means abide in the monastery. Although the man of God had often reproved and admonished him for it, he would in no wise consent to remain in the congregation, and often entreated earnestly to be released. So the venerable Father, overcome by his importunity, in anger bade him begone.

Scarcely had he gotten out of the monastery when he met on the way a dragon that, with open mouth, made towards him. Seeing it ready to devour him, he began to quake and tremble, crying out aloud, "Help, help, for this dragon will devour me!" The brethren, upon this, ran out, yet saw no dragon, but took the panting and affrighted monk back again to the monastery, who forthwith promised never to depart, and from that time he remained always constant in his promise. He, by the prayers of the holy man, was made to see the dragon ready to devour him, which before he had followed unperceived.

How He Prophetically Foretold His Death to His Brethren

The same year in which he departed out of this life, he foretold the day of his most holy death to some of his disciples who conversed with him and to others who were far off, giving strict charge to those who were present to keep in silence what they had heard and declaring to the absent by what sign they should know when his soul departed out of his body. Six days before his departure, he caused his grave to be opened, and immediately after, he fell into a fever, by the violence whereof his strength began to wax faint; and the infirmity daily increasing, the sixth day he caused his disciples to carry him into the oratory, where he armed himself for his going forth by receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord; then supporting his weak limbs by the hands of his disciples, he stood up, his hands lifted towards Heaven, and with words of prayer, at last breathed forth his soul.

The same day two of his brethren, the one living in the monastery and the other in a place far remote, had a revelation in one and the self-same manner. For they beheld a way, spread with garments and shining with innumerable lamps, stretching directly eastwards from his cell up to Heaven; a man of venerable aspect stood above and asked them whose way that was. But they professing they knew not, he said to them, "This is the way by which the beloved of the Lord, Benedict, ascended." Thus the disciples who were present knew of the death of the holy man, and so also those who were absent understood it by the sign foretold them. He was buried in the oratory of St. John the Baptist, which he himself had built upon the ruins of Apollo's altar.

Here end the writings of St. Gregory the Great.

CONCLUSION

St. Benedict, the great Patriarch of the Western monks, died March 21, 547, on the Saturday preceding Passion Sunday. His edifying and victorious death was indeed suited to so great a champion of Christ. In his last hour, he assumed a standing position and thus manifested the power and authority his soul had attained over his body; even to the last moment, while a burning fever was consuming his life and strength, he held himself erect. He died in the church, in that sanctified place where daily with his brethren he had sung the praises of the Triune God and assisted in the celebration of the Sacred Mystery, the life-giving Sacrifice of the Mass. Even to this day, his sacred remains are resting beside those of his sister Scholastica in the church of St. John the Baptist at Monte Cassino.

In the course of years, numberless miracles have glorified his tomb. Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604) mentions that at his time, miracles were wrought through the intercession of St. Benedict whenever the petitioner was penetrated with lively faith.

The Rule of St. Benedict

St. Gregory says, "Not only on account of his numerous miracles was St. Benedict a shining light to the world, but also by reason of his precepts and his teachings. He wrote a rule for monks which is distinguished for its wonderful discretion and clearness of thought."

In this rule, the Saint laid down laws and precepts necessary for conventual life. In seventy-three chapters he regulates the entire monastic life by combining the principles of the Gospel into a clear, concise rule for the life in a monastery. It is true that many holy men, as St. Basil the Great, St. Pachomius and the Irish Abbot St. Columban, had written monastic rules previous to this, but these were soon replaced by the Rule of St. Benedict, and within a hundred years it was introduced into nearly all the convents of Europe. When at the Council of Aachen, in 817, this rule was exclusively elevated as the code of laws for the monastic life, it became a source of blessing to the whole Church throughout the Middle Ages and up to the time of the suppression of monasteries. In the meantime, it was faithfully and punctually observed in about 37,000 convents and became a powerful factor in laying the foundation and fostering civilization and morality, science and art, among the people of Europe.

It had been assumed of old, and popes and councils had clearly expressed, that the holy rule was written through the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. For this reason, it is so perfect and complete that it remained unaltered during fourteen centuries, and no one had ever thought of changing or improving it. In the general and essential precepts for the monastic life, for example, the teachings regarding obedience, silence, charity, poverty, etc., this rule was the standard, not only for the Order of St. Benedict, but for the monastic and religious life in general, and for all later forms and branches thereof.

As St. Gregory mentions, the holy rule is characterized by prudent regulation and by a wonderful discretion, the mother of all virtues, and therefore we behold a truly admirable combination of severity and mildness, of prudence and love. St. Fulgentius says that the Rule of St. Benedict contains everything that is required and is lacking in nothing; the followers thereof will attain to eternal glory. The truth of this statement is confirmed by the fourteen centuries of its existence and by the thousands of Saints it has produced. The Benedictine Order numbers about 60,000 Saints recognized by the Church, all of whom are indebted to the holy rule for their place upon its altars.

St. Benedict's Glory in Heaven

At the time when St. Benedict entered the realms of eternal bliss, it was not yet customary for the Church to make investigations into the lives of those who had died in the odor of sanctity for the purpose of bringing about their canonization. It was sufficient whenever the voice of the people and clergy agreed with that of the bishop. This was the case with the servant of God, St. Benedict. Already during his life, he was universally believed to be a Saint, and his sanctity and miracles proved this beyond all doubt. After his death, no one doubted for a moment that he was permitted to take possession of the glory of Heaven as a recompense for his exceedingly meritorious life. God Himself confirmed this pious belief in his sanctity by the miracles which glorified his tomb and by granting the numerous petitions of those who invoked him. Popes and learned men vied with

one another in praising and exalting the glories of the Saint. The greatest reward of Heaven is the vision of God, and this constitutes the actual and essential bliss, which is imparted to a soul according to the degree of grace it has merited. Let us consider the abundance of graces that St. Benedict possessed, even as a youth, and how by faithful cooperation he constantly increased therein to the end of his life. How glorious must his soul now be, and how near God's throne! He was also endowed with the special prerogatives and adornments of the virgins, martyrs and doctors of the Church; for he distinguished himself in virginal purity, was a martyr of love by unceasingly crucifying his flesh and performing frequent and fervent acts of love, and he was a teacher and father to millions by word and example.

The immense number of his followers who, under his leadership, attained to eternal life and now surround him at the throne of God are to him a source of most extraordinary joy and glory. St. Gertrude, one of the most renowned of his spiritual daughters, once, on the Feast of St. Benedict, saw this her glorious Father before the throne of the Blessed Trinity all radiant and resplendent. His garments were brilliant, his countenance full of majesty and beauty, while magnificent roses seemed to spring forth from all the members of his body. From each of these roses there sprouted forth another, and from this again another, the last of which always surpassed the others in beauty and fragrance. The holy Father, thus adorned, was a wonderful spectacle of bliss and joy to the adorable Trinity and the whole heavenly host. From this vision, St. Gertrude understood that the roses signified the pious exercises whereby he subjected his flesh to the spirit and all the holy actions which he himself had performed during his life, as also the acts of virtue of those who through his example and teaching were induced to renounce the world and, following him on the royal road of monastic discipline, had already entered, or would still enter, the heavenly kingdom. Each of these is a particular glory to this great Patriarch, and while the entire heavenly host rejoices at his glory and happiness, they praise God for it unceasingly.

The love and confidence with which the faithful at Subiaco and Monte Cassino were devoted to St. Benedict increased still more after his death. The resting place of his sacred remains was frequently visited by great numbers. They prayed to him in their homes and everywhere, with the confidence that his power had not been lessened in Heaven and that his love would be as active and charitable as during life. Thus, within a very short time, the veneration of the Saint had spread throughout Italy, and later on, with the extension of his Order, over the entire West. Two hundred years later, in every village and city of Europe, his name was honored and his intercession invoked, and every country had erected monasteries in his honor. Princes and people, clergy and laity, the learned and the ignorant, all were intent on honoring him.

St. Benedict has ever been considered patron of a happy death and a most powerful intercessor at the last hour. His own death was most happy and precious. Standing praying before the Most Blessed Sacrament, he died like a champion, conquering flesh and Hell. St. Benedict appeared once to St. Gertrude, saying, "Whosoever reminds me of the extraordinary prerogative with which the Lord deigned to glorify my death shall be assisted by me at his death, and I will be his faithful protector against the assaults of the wicked enemy. Fortified by my presence, he will escape the snares of the evil one and safely attain to eternal glory." This accounts for the confidence which animates the faithful in those countries where St. Benedict is specially venerated, that he would give them some sign of their approaching death and induce them to prepare themselves.

Promises

Promises made to the holy Father regarding the destiny of his Order and that of its friends and enemies:*

1. His Order will continue to exist to the End of the World.
2. It will, at the End of the World, in the final battle, render great services to the holy Church and confirm many in the Faith.
3. No one shall die in the Order whose salvation would not be assured. And if a monk begins to lead a bad life and does not amend, he will fall into disgrace, or be expelled from the Order, or will leave it of his own accord.
4. Everyone who persecutes his Order and does not repent will see his days shortened or meet with an unfortunate end.
5. All, however, who love his Order will obtain a happy death.

THE MEDAL OF ST. BENEDICT

There is indeed no medal which possesses such wonderful power and none so highly esteemed by the holy Church as the Medal of St. Benedict. Whosoever wears this medal with devotion, trusting to the life-giving power of the holy Cross and the merits of the holy Father St. Benedict, may expect the powerful protection of this great Patriarch in his spiritual and temporal needs.

Origin of the Medal

The origin of the Medal probably dates back to the time of St. Benedict himself, of whom we know that, in his frequent combats with the evil spirit, he generally made use of the Sign of the Cross and wrought many miracles thereby. He also taught his disciples to use the Sign of our redemption against the assaults of Satan and in other dangers. St. Maurus and St. Placidus, his first and most renowned disciples, wrought their numerous miracles through the power of the holy Cross and in the name and by the merits of their holy Founder.

The Medal of St. Benedict became more widely known through the following wonderful occurrence: Bruno, afterwards Pope Leo IX, had in his youth been bitten by a venomous reptile, in consequence of which he was seriously ill for two months. He had lost the use of speech and was soon reduced to a skeleton. All hopes of his recovery had been abandoned, when suddenly he beheld a luminous ladder that reached to Heaven, from which descended a venerable old man wearing the habit of a monk. It was St. Benedict, bearing in his hand a radiant cross, with which he touched the swollen face of Bruno and instantly cured him. Then the apparition disappeared.

Bruno, who had been healed in such a miraculous manner, later on entered the Order of St. Benedict. He ascended the papal throne in the year 1048 under the name of Leo IX and was renowned in the Church for his sanctity, his devotion to the holy Cross and to St. Benedict. Through this pope the Medal of St. Benedict was enriched with special blessings, and its veneration spread every where. The use of the Medal was solemnly approved and recommended to the faithful by Pope Benedict XIV in 1742.

The Blessing of the Medal Of St. Benedict

The Medal of St. Benedict must be blessed by a Benedictine Father, or by a priest especially authorized.* There are three solemn prayers of the Church for the blessing of the Medal.

The **first prayer** is an exorcism of the wicked spirit, to make void his evil influence, with the earnest petition that the Medal be for the welfare of the body and soul of the wearer. **The second prayer** is a fervent petition:

O Almighty God, the Giver of all good gifts, we humbly beseech Thee that Thou wouldst bestow, through the intercession of the holy Father St. Benedict, Thy blessing upon these Medals, their letters and characters designed by Thee, that all who wear them and strive to perform good works may obtain health of body and soul, the grace of salvation, the indulgences conceded to us, and, by the assistance of Thy mercy, escape the snares and deceptions of the devil and appear holy and stainless in Thy sight. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The third prayer is very impressive in virtue of the detailed and solemn commemoration of the agony, sufferings and death of Our Lord.

After the blessing, the Medals cannot be sold; otherwise, the blessing is lost. Medals must be bought before they are blessed.

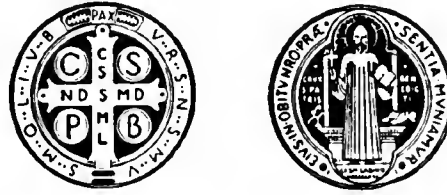
Description of the Medal

We distinguish two types of the Medal of St. Benedict: the ordinary medal, and that of Monte Cassino, which is known

as the Jubilee Medal. The latter has been enriched with a great number of indulgences, especially with the famous *Toties Quoties* plenary indulgence on All Souls' Day. We describe here only the Jubilee Medal.

In the year 1880 the venerable Benedictine Order celebrated the 1400th anniversary of the birth of its glorious founder. The beautiful Jubilee Medal was struck on this occasion, and since that time the Monastery of Monte Cassino has the sole privilege of striking this Medal. Hence all Jubilee medals must be procured from the Monastery of Monte Cassino.

On one side the Medal has a cross, the sign of our redemption, the protecting shield given us by God to ward off the fiery arrows of the evil spirit.



In the angles of the cross are found these four letters: **C. S. P. B.** They stand for the words: **Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti**—"The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict."

On the vertical bar of the cross itself are found the letters: **C. S. S. M. L.**, and on the horizontal bar of the cross: **N. D. S. M. D.** They signify:

**Crux Sacra Sit Mihi Lux,
Non Draco Sit Mihi Dux.**

This means:

May the holy Cross be my light,
Let not the dragon be my guide.

Round the margin of the Medal, beginning at the right hand on top, we have the following letters: **V. R. S. N. S. M. V.**—**S. M. Q. L. I. V. B.** They stand for the verses:

**Vade Retro, Satana!
Nunquam Suade Mihi Vana.
Sunt Mala Quae Libas;
Ipse Venena Bibas.**

The English words are:

Begone, Satan!
Suggest not vain things to me.
Evil is the cup thou offerest;
Drink thou thine own poison.

The reverse of the Medal bears the image of St. Benedict holding in his right hand the Cross, in the power of which he wrought so many miracles, and in his left hand bearing the holy Rule, which leads all its followers by the way of the Cross to eternal light.

Round the margin is the inscription: **Eius in obitu nostro praesentia muniamur**—"May his presence protect us in the hour of our death."

The Power and Effects of the Medal

Let us state here that we do not ascribe any unknown or hidden power to the Medal, a power which the superstitious ascribe to their charms. We know wherein its power lies, and we protest that the graces and favors are due, not to the gold or the silver, the brass or aluminum of the Medal, but to our faith in the merits of Christ crucified, to the efficacious prayers of the holy Father St. Benedict, and to the blessings which the holy Church bestows upon the Medal and upon those who wear it. This Medal excludes every power or influence which is not from above.

Through the pious use of the Medal of St. Benedict thousands of miracles and wonderful cures have been obtained. We would here mention that in the last few years we have received a number of letters relating most remarkable cures and extraordinary favors obtained by the devout use of the said Medal. It is, indeed, edifying to see how the faithful love and venerate this highly blessed Medal and how anxious they are to obtain this holy article, which has proved to be a remedy for almost every evil.

The Medal of St. Benedict is powerful *to ward off all dangers of body and soul coming from the evil spirit*. We are exposed to the wicked assaults of the devil day and night. St. Peter says, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (*1 Peter* 5:8). In the life of St. Benedict we see how the devil tried to do harm to his soul and body, and also to his spiritual children. Father Paul of Moll, saintly Flemish Benedictine wonder-worker (1824-1896), frustrated the evil doings of the spirit of darkness chiefly through the use of the Medal of St. Benedict, which has proved a most powerful protection against the snares and delusions of the old enemy. Missionaries in pagan lands use this Medal with so great effect that it has been given the remarkable name, "The devil-chasing Medal."

The Medal is, therefore, a powerful means:

- To destroy witchcraft and all other diabolical influences.
- To keep away the spells of magicians, of wicked and evil-minded persons.
- To impart protection to persons tempted, deluded or tormented by evil spirits.
- To obtain the conversion of sinners, especially when they are in danger of death.
- To serve as an armor in temptations against holy purity.
- To destroy the effects of poison.
- To secure a timely and healthy birth for children.
- To afford protection against storms and lightning.
- To serve as an efficacious remedy for bodily afflictions and a means of protection against contagious diseases.

Finally, the Medal has often been used with admirable effect even for animals infected with plague or other maladies, and for fields when invaded by harmful insects.

The Use of the Medal

It may be worn about the neck, attached to the scapular or the rosary, or otherwise carried devoutly about one's person. For the sick it can be placed on wounds, dipped in medicine or in water which is given to them to drink.

The Medal is frequently put into the foundation of houses or in walls, hung over doors, or fastened on stables and barns to call down God's protection and blessing. It is also buried in fields, as the saintly Father Paul of Moll advised his friends to do.

No particular prayers are prescribed, for the very wearing and use of the Medal is considered a silent prayer to God to grant us, through the merits of St. Benedict, the favors we request. However, for obtaining extraordinary favors, it is highly recommended to perform special devotions in honor of the holy Father St. Benedict, for instance, on Tuesday, on which day the Church commemorates the death of the holy Patriarch. The Way of the Cross is also highly recommended, or a novena to St. Benedict. His feast is celebrated March 21st, two days after the feast of St. Joseph.

Plenary Indulgences

A plenary indulgence may be gained on the following feasts of Our Lord:

Christmas

Epiphany (January 6)

Easter

Ascension

Pentecost

Trinity Sunday

Corpus Christi

On the following feasts of the Blessed Virgin:

Immaculate Conception (December 8)

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (September 8)

Purification (Candlemas Day, February 2)

Annunciation (March 25)

Assumption (August 15)

Also, a plenary indulgence may be gained on the principal feasts of the Benedictine Order:

St. Maurus (January 15)

St. Scholastica (sister of St. Benedict, Feb. 10)

St. Benedict (March 21)

Dedication of the Basilica of Monte Cassino (October 1)

St. Placidus (October 5)

All Saints of our Order (November 13)

St. Gertrude (November 17)

A plenary indulgence on the feast of All Saints (November 1), once a year (at choice) and also at the hour of death.

For gaining all these plenary indulgences, the conditions required are: 1) the wearing of the Jubilee Medal, 2) the usual Confession and Communion, 3) a visit to a church, 4) prayers for the Pope and for the conversion of sinners.

The “Toties Quoties” Indulgence

A great privilege connected with the Jubilee Medal by the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, February 27, 1907 deserves special mention: the *Toties Quoties* plenary indulgence on *All Souls’ Day*, November 2.

By virtue of this decree, all who habitually wear the Jubilee Medal can gain a plenary indulgence for the Poor Souls in Purgatory *as often as (toties quoties)* they visit any Catholic church or public oratory and pray according to the intention of the Holy Father and receive the Sacraments either on All Saints’ or on All Souls’ Day. Where there is a Benedictine church within one mile of your own church, the visits must be made to the Benedictine church. One need leave the church for only a few minutes between visits.

This great indulgence for the Poor Souls may be gained from twelve o’clock noon on All Saints’ Day until twelve o’clock midnight on All Souls’ Day. For thirty-six hours you may gain as many plenary indulgences as you make visits. What a wonderful help for the Poor Souls!

Another Privilege

Those who devoutly wear the Medal of St. Benedict and pray for the propagation of his holy Order share in all the

good works, Masses, Communions, Divine Office, prayers and fasts of the entire Order.

PRAYERS

St. Benedict Medal Prayer

May the intercession of the Blessed Patriarch and Abbot Benedict render Thee merciful unto us, O Lord, that what our own unworthiness cannot obtain, we may receive through his powerful patronage. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen

(This prayer may be said when using the Medal for any pious purpose.)

A Prayer in Honor of St. Benedict For a Happy Hour of Death

O holy Father blessed by God both in grace and in name, who while standing in prayer with thy hands raised to Heaven didst most happily yield thine angelic spirit into the hands of thy Creator, and who hast promised zealously to defend against all the snares of the enemy, in the last struggle of death, those who should daily remind thee of thy glorious departure and thy heavenly joys, protect me, I beseech thee, O glorious Father, this day and every day, by thy holy blessing, that I may never be separated from our blessed Lord, from thy company, and from that of all the blessed, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

(Once St. Gertrude reminded St. Benedict of his glorious death; thereupon the holy Patriarch gave her the following assurance: "All who invoke me, remembering the glorious death with which God honored me, shall be assisted by me at their death with such fidelity that I will place myself where I see the enemy most disposed to attack them. Thus being fortified by my presence, they will escape the snares which he lays for them and depart happily and peacefully to the enjoyment of eternal beatitude.")

A Prayer of St. Gertrude in Honor of St. Benedict

I salute thee, through the Heart of Jesus, O great St. Benedict! I rejoice in thy glory, and I give thanks to Our Lord for all the benefits which He has showered upon thee; I praise Him and glorify Him and I offer thee, for an increase of thy joy and honor, the most gentle Heart of Jesus. Deign therefore, O beloved Father, to pray for us, that we may become according to the Heart of God. Amen.

Novena Prayer to St. Benedict

O glorious St. Benedict, sublime model of virtue, pure vessel of God's grace! Behold me humbly kneeling at thy feet. I implore thee, in thy loving kindness, to pray for me before the throne of God. To thee do I have recourse in the dangers that daily surround me. Shield me against my selfishness and my indifference to God and to my neighbor. Inspire me to imitate thee in all things. May thy blessing be with me always, so that I may see and serve Christ in others and work for His kingdom.

Graciously obtain for me from God those favors and graces which I need so much in the trials, miseries and afflictions of life. Thy heart was always full of love, compassion and mercy toward those who were afflicted or troubled in any way. Thou didst never dismiss without consolation and assistance anyone who had recourse to thee. I therefore invoke thy powerful intercession, confident in the hope that thou wilt hear my prayers and obtain for me the special grace and favor I earnestly implore. (*Name your petition.*)

Help me, great St. Benedict, to live and die as a faithful child of God, to run in the sweetness of His loving will and to attain the eternal happiness of Heaven. Amen.

* “Benedict” = “blessed”; “Maledict” = “cursed.”

* See Arnoldus *Visiones: Lignum vitae*, Rome, 1595.

* As of September 26, 1964, the blessing can be given by any priest. Also, Dom Gueranger states that the Medal is powerful even without the special Benedictine blessing.—*Publisher*, 1995.